



MONTANA DNRC Conversation

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No birds were singing and the black bears and the grizzlies were very definitely asleep. Five feet of snow blanketed the Swan River State Forest. The daytime temperature crept into the teens; the calendar read Thursday, Jan. 17.

Was this really the kind of day DNRC's Forestry Bureau would choose to conduct a four-hour public tour of a proposed timber sale? The simple answer would be an unqualified 'no,' but harvesting trees on public land is not always a simple assignment.

At the Dec. 17 meeting of the State Land Board, DNRC Forest Management Bureau Chief David Groeschl stood at the podium fielding questions from commissioners about the second Three Creeks Timber Sale. The Three Creeks Project consists of four individual timber sales in the northeast area of the Swan River State Forest. Some environmental groups at the meeting had a bone to pick about the expectation that DNRC would convene an "advisory group" to monitor harvest activities on the first sale before seeking Land Board approval on the second sale.

Groeschl replied that "it was the Department's understanding that the main intent was not necessarily to form another group or committee, but to provide a forum for 'ongoing dialogue' with local groups regarding forest management activities on the Swan River State Forest, and more specifically with the Three Creeks Timber Sale projects." He also pointed out that between the severe fire sea-



DNRC Forest Management Bureau Chief David Groeschl makes a point during the Three Creeks Timber Sale tour.

Photo courtesy of Dave Van Nice

son of 2007 and the onset of winter, there were no harvest activities to monitor – roads had been built, but little else had taken place on the ground. The opposition wasn't satisfied with Groeschl's answer; one conservation group asked that approval of the second Three Creeks sale be postponed until a meeting could be arranged.

Land Board commissioners ultimately gave unanimous approval to the second Three Creeks timber sale, but not before State Auditor John Morrison offered an olive branch to the opposition. He requested DNRC arrange a tour of the first Three Creeks sale as soon as it could be done. Groeschl said DNRC would be happy to comply.

As Groeschl left the Land Board meeting, he knew putting on a tour in the middle of winter was going to be a challenge; he couldn't remember the last time DNRC had even tried such a thing.

Late that afternoon, Swan Unit Manager Dan Roberson's phone rang. It was Groeschl calling. "Dave said we needed to put a Three Creeks tour together," Roberson said. "He brought me up to speed on the Land Board meeting. We had a lot to do and not a lot of time to do it."

Roberson's first order of business – with one week before Christmas – was to make contact with all of the stakeholders and work out a tour date that would accommodate as many schedules as possible. After settling on Jan. 17, Roberson and DNRC employees in the Swan Unit took stock of the larger, more

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FROM THE DIRECTOR Quiet Excellence!

As I become even better acquainted with the Department, I continue to find examples of quiet excellence. DNRC employees are working together, working for Montana citizens, and working to find a better way to get things done. Many DNRC folks quietly do their jobs in excellent ways!

Here are just a few examples – I know there are many more as I keep discovering them:

GIS staff under the guidance of Evan Hammer, our agency-wide GIS coordinator, is striving to expand our GIS mapping and data collection abilities. Along with other agencies, we have formed a state-wide enterprise GIS group so we can access the latest ESRI software, utilize the latest techniques in GIS, and still keep costs down. I am constantly amazed at the innovation and effective use of GIS for fire maps, water adjudication, and weed locating – to name a few uses!

Jesse Aber in Water Resources has been teaming up with Administrator John Tubbs and the Lt. Governor to enhance and improve the function of the State Drought Advisory Council. Established in the '90s, the committee has an even more serious role as we continue to



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Inventing restoration: New state coordinator loves challenge

"Where should I start today?"

This is the question Monica Pokorny asks herself each morning as she takes a seat at her desk. It's enough of a challenge to learn the ropes of a new job, but Monica's task is bigger: She's designing a position that has never before existed, figuring it out as she goes along. She's the State Restoration Coordinator, and each day she takes another step toward answering the question of what Montana's Restoration Program should accomplish.

The origins of Monica's post date back to June of 2006, when Governor Brian Schweitzer convened a forum on restoration activities. Mining interests, watershed and forestry groups, business and labor leaders, economic development specialists and community activists came together to discuss the needs and opportunities for natural resource restoration in Montana.

One of the issues to surface involved coordination. Restoration activities are often carried out by state or federal agencies and the private sector without any knowledge of what other groups might be doing. If the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks was doing stream restoration in an area where the Montana Department of Transportation was planning a road-improvement project, how might the work be coordinated to ensure the efforts of one agency didn't impede the other? Could the agencies schedule projects to share resources such as heavy equipment, and save money?

Brainstorming sessions at the forum produced the concepts that would later become a job description. When she read the announcement, Monica



Monica Pokorny, State Restoration Coordinator (photo by John Grassy)

says, "I was thrilled, because it described a union of my personal interests and professional work."

Monica holds a BA in biology (with a minor in wildlife biology) from the University of Montana, and a Masters in land resources and environmental science from Montana State University. She has worked as a natural resource consultant and a researcher at MSU, where she co-authored restoration-related publications and a field guide to noxious weeds.

"I've been involved in habitat and wildlife restoration projects for years and find it incredibly satisfying work," she said. "Understanding the impacts of restoration on local and state economies is a new personal interest. I'm now doing a lot of reading on restorative economics and visualizing how restoring damaged lands, implementing restoration incentives and policy changes can all contribute to a better Montana."

In her first two months on the job, Monica met with more than 100 people, listening to their ideas and needs in the area of restoration. In early April, she put the finishing touches on a draft Restoration Program Plan, which outlines broad goals and further defines the role of the Restoration Coordinator. "The plan answers the question, 'why is restoration important?'" Monica says. "It provides a series of common goals for stakeholders in the restoration community, the public and private sectors."

Her work becomes more tangible every day, moving from theory to practice; and this, Monica says, is the best thing of all. "It's getting more exciting now, because I'm really beginning to see what we can do," she says. "And there's a lot we can do."

DNRC visits the Montana Rural Water Systems Conference



Governor Brian Schweitzer was the keynote speaker at this year's Montana Regional Water Systems conference. (photo provided)

DNRC had a strong presence at this year's Montana Rural Water Conference, held in Great Falls on Feb. 20-21. The conference was attended by more than 1,000 and included people from across the state involved in water, wastewater and solid waste systems. There were representatives from DEQ and EPA talking water project financing and regulation; vendors from engineering firms hawking the latest in energy-efficient pumps, valves, water tanks and computer software; and water system operators, clerks and board members in search of training to address the needs of their communities.

Anna Miller, Pam Smith, Diana Hoy and Bob Fischer from CARDD presented a pre-conference training session on project funding and

systems financial management. Warren Kellogg, DNRC/NRCS watershed specialist, offered training on watershed planning and watershed activities around the state.

Regional Water Coordinator Rick Duncan has made it to just about every Montana Rural Water Conference for the past decade. "There are around one thousand people attending nowadays," he said. "I think the first one I went to while working for DEQ had half that many."

As DNRC's liaison to four major rural water projects under way around the state, Rick said he doesn't need to find out about the newest equipment and technology. This year, he spent his time educating others about the importance of delivering high-quality water to sparsely-populated areas, and touching base with representatives from other state and federal agencies.

"I find that I'm sometimes able to smooth ruffled feathers on the part of some of the system operators, and provide both general and specific information about regional water systems," he said. "It's been more effective for me to circulate throughout the exhibit areas and some of the hospitality rooms, where a less

formal atmosphere allows some of these folks to express their ideas, their hopes and concerns for the future of their systems."

This year's conference featured a keynote address by Governor Brian Schweitzer, who was followed by David Cobb, a member of U.S. Senator Max Baucus' staff. David read a letter from Sen. Baucus reaffirming his support for funding infrastructure. U.S. Representative Denny Rehberg addressed the conference on Thursday, while U.S. Senator Jon Tester spoke at Friday's luncheon, telling conference-goers that funding for infrastructure projects in Montana ranks among his top legislative priorities. All of the elected officials agreed that the people in attendance at this conference were dedicated individuals who volunteered their time and talents to serve on boards, work with operating systems, and assist communities.

CARRD also uses the Rural Water Conference as an opportunity to recycle. For several years now, Anna, Pam and Diana have shown up at the conference with a large stack of the previous year's phonebooks. People from small communities across the state love having a state phonebook even if it is from 2007.

"This gets valuable contact information out the water and wastewater systems all over Montana," Anna explained. "We take a full box and the phonebooks all get snapped up by noon. Some people whistle while they work — CARRD recycles while they work."

FireSafe Montana continues to see success DNRC one of organization's founding members

In 2006, DNRC and its partners hosted the inaugural "Montana Communities & Wildfire Conference" in Helena, during which close to 300 attendees representing a broad spectrum of interests gathered to discuss how to address Montana's wildland urban interface challenges, educate homeowners, and minimize losses from wildland fires. The key recommendation from that event was the need for a statewide organization committed to homeowner education and outreach as well as to promote homeowner responsibility and risk reduction in the interface. Thus, FireSafe Montana came into existence, and most of 2006 and 2007 were spent on the painstaking but necessary tasks of building the organization: drafting a charter, articles of incorporation, bylaws, electing officers and seeking non-profit status for the organization. At the same time, much work was done on marketing, membership and outreach. FireSafe developed a great website as well, (www.firesafemontana.org) and there are plans to create local FireSafe Councils around the state which will receive

support from the statewide group.

In February, 2008, almost two years to the day from the first conference, FireSafe Montana hosted a second event, complete with nationally recognized speakers, members of the Montana Legislature, and a growing network of partners

who are implementing fuels mitigation projects across the state. At this recent conference DNRC Fire & Aviation Management Bureau Chief Ted Mead presented the FireSafe Board of Directors with a framed certificate celebrating their success over the past two years.



Ted Mead (second from left) presents a certificate to FireSafe Montana members (L-R) Mike Dannenberg, Jim Nethercott, Pat McKelvey, Sonny Stiger, Carol Daly, Don Lorenzen and Jake Kreilick.

Stopping, continued from front page

obvious challenge: It was the dead of winter. Roads through the forest were impassable. Tour participants were not only going to have to drive to a number of places, they were going to have to walk to several sites. They would need to get their vehicles turned around. In any other season these would have been minor concerns, but there was three to five feet of snow on the ground.

"We had to plow a lot of roads," Roberson said. "And the timing was a factor. Plowing is expensive, and we needed to plow far enough in advance that Kristen Baker (the Unit's Forest Management Supervisor) and I could get in there to decide on tour stops, but if we plowed too early and it snowed we would have to do it all over again." Maintenance Supervisor Claude Cassidy handled the job of figuring out the most feasible areas for plowing turnarounds, and it was Cassidy aboard a road grader and Senior Engine Boss Aaron King on a front-end loader who spent two days moving snow.

With the roads open, Roberson and Kristen Baker went in to design the tour. Conservation groups were concerned about a number of issues, including new road construction, wildlife habitat security, water quality, and the potential effects on fish habitat of cutting timber in streamside riparian corridors. "Old-growth is another key issue for Three Creeks," said Roberson. "We wanted people to see the kinds of old-growth stands we plan to keep on the landscape, stands that are healthy and still growing, and contrast those with stands that showed a lot of disease and decay."

In all, there would be seven tour stops, high-

lighting best management practices for road construction, streamside harvest techniques, sediment mitigation measures, and seed tree harvest sites. The tour would conclude with a stop to view regenerated stands in areas harvested 30 and 50 years earlier, allowing people to see what the Three Creeks projects would look like in the future.

A light snowfall was in progress as tour participants gathered in the Swan Unit parking lot on the morning of Jan. 17. The organizations represented included the Swan Ecosystem Center, State Land Board, Montana Logging Association, Friends of The Wild Swan, Northwest Connections, and Stoltz Land and Lumber. The well-prepared wore pac boots and gaiters and everyone carried a lunch.

Beneath the canopy of a cold, silent forest, dialogue between DNRC staff and 14 tour participants was fast-paced and rigorous. Attendees from the environmental community did not lack for knowledge of forest ecology and weren't shy about questioning most every facet of DNRC's presentation.

The expertise and professionalism displayed by DNRC was even more impressive. Kristen Baker, who had done most of the technical work on the Three Creeks projects, discussed the science behind each aspect of the timber sale, and was often joined by Dan Roberson in lengthy dialogue about old growth and forest succession. David Groeschl handled programmatic questions though he was equally comfortable talking science. Fisheries Biologist Jim Bower answered queries about riparian and aquatic habitats. Forest Management Bureau Wildlife Biologist Ross Baty discussed forest habitats and mammals. Sonya Germann, DNRC's

MEPA Planner, took notes in the bitter cold, transcribing each issue or concern raised by the audience.

Trust Lands Division Administrator Tom Schultz was also present, as were Shawn Thomas, the Northwest Area Program Manager for Trust Lands, Steve Frye, Northwest Area Operations Manager, and John Grassy, Public Information Officer.

Nearly five hours after they set out, with numb faces and extremities, attendees of the Three Creeks Forest Management Project Tour caravanned out of the trees and said their goodbyes in the Swan Unit parking lot. A few of them mingled with Roberson and his DNRC colleagues. The tour already was a public relations success. Riding together and visiting between tour stops, names had been put to faces and small biographical details shared through the afternoon. For tour participants, the DNRC acronym had given way to real people with real lives – people with a passion for their work, and for sustainable working forests.

"I think the tour encouraged some new dialogue," Roberson said. "Just a desire at the local level to be more involved as we develop future management plans. And people just got a better sense of each other."

The following day, an email Roberson from Dave Van Nice, Land Board Advisor to State Auditor John Morrison, summed up the results:

"A big thank-you to Dan Roberson and all the DNRC staff that made yesterday's Three Creeks tour a great success. DNRC staff was at their very best and I'm sure the tour participants from the public sector were as impressed as I was. Thanks DNRC!"

Fire season's on the way, here's how you can help

Fire season '08 will be here soon, and if previous years are any indication, it will again require an all-hands effort. All DNRC employees are encouraged to help – here's all the information you need to get engaged this fire season.

There a number of ways to help, even if you have no training or experience.

Oftentimes, field offices managing multiple fires or heavy activity could benefit from extra people doing miscellaneous duties such as running errands, ordering meals, delivering supplies, receptionist, clerical help, or other tasks. Something as simple as pitching in to stock coolers, empty trash, or make copies might be just what's needed to keep things running smoothly. This is a great way to lend a hand even if you don't have any interest in pursuing additional career development in fire suppression/support.

There are jobs within the incident command system (ICS) that have no required training prior to becoming a trainee. For positions such as Public Information Officer, Status Check-In Recorder, Base Camp Manager, Equipment Time Recorder, Personnel Time Recorder and Dispatch Manager, you can become a trainee

(issued a Position Task Book by your training officer) immediately and learn the skills on the job. This also provides the foundation should you decide to gain additional, advanced qualifications within ICS. In recent years, the DNRC has assembled local buying teams to support incidents, and several DNRC employees have helped in this capacity.

To help locally you can simply make arrangements with local offices; to be ordered for an incident, you need to be entered into the Incident Qualification System (IQS). For DNRC HQ employees, Lucy Richards is coordinating all updates to IQS. For field personnel, there are designated fire personnel at each Area office.

Remember, if you intend to be available for assignment to an incident, all positions are required to view the fire shelter video and complete a practice fire shelter deployment in the field in proper personal protection equipment (PPE). All operation positions and others that regularly do work on the fireline are required to take a 4-hour annual fireline safety training. These classes are offered regularly throughout the state during the months of April, May and June.

If you want fire training, contact the appropriate DNRC personnel. Field personnel should work through Area Land Office fire personnel to develop a training plan and for nominations into upcoming courses. Land Office Contacts are as follows: John Raisler (ELO), Steve Wilkins (SLO), Jerry Buhre (NELO), Greg Archie (CLO), Wally Bennett (NWLO) and Jim Costamagna (SWLO). Personal at DNRC Department Headquarters should coordinate through the Central Land Office.

The DNRC Fire Training Program Manager is Jim Blankenship. Contact Jim at 542-4282 if you have additional questions or need more information about fire training opportunities.

From the previous issue:

On the Job with a DNRC Employee... get a glimpse inside the fabulous job of Janel Favero, DNRC webmaster at www.dnrc.mt.gov/about_us/adayinthelife/janel.swf

DNRC Logo Contest... results coming soon!

Thumbs up, Thumbs down



Thumbs up to Bob Levitan and Emily Greene in their recycling efforts. DNRC Headquarters now recycles cardboard and plastics.



Thumbs down to the parking situation at headquarters... Seems like it might be time for us to start "Taking another way."



Thumbs up to the RWRCC on completing the Blackfeet Tribe Water Compact.



Thumbs Up to the snowpack status, At this time, our surface water supply for the 2008 season looks good



Thumbs Up to Dan Rogers for running another successful Arbor Day Celebration in Townsend on April 25.



DNRC foresters Dan Rogers, left, and Fred Bicha, right, were all smiles with Director Mary Sexton following the successful State Arbor Day celebration in Townsend May 25. Dan and Fred handled all of the coordination and logistics for the event.
(photo by John Grassy)

Let's CONSERVE Energy!

Please turn out lights when leaving an Empty Room



Director, continued from front page

see trends of lower snowpack, decreased stream flows, greater fire activity, and other indications of extended drought. The more we know about our weather and climate, the better we can prepare for consequences.

In the Trust Lands Management Division, Monte Mason and his crew continue to super-

vise large volumes of oil and gas leasing on state land while maintaining healthy land, water, and wildlife attributes. Their workload has really shot up in the past decade, and the bureau is expecting to capture revenue for school trusts in the range of \$30 - \$35 Million this year.

As we move into spring, many of you will be busy preparing for fire season, summer field work, and getting a head start on legislative

proposals for next session. I know that you may not always be recognized for all the good work you do –either by the public or even by the Department, but I want to thank you for your continued "quiet" excellent efforts throughout the year to fulfill the many missions of DNRC. Your contributions are appreciated!



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